

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 099 874

CS 201 758

AUTHOR Nemanich, Donald, Ed.
TITLE Teacher Literature.
PUB DATE Oct 74
NOTE 28p.
JOURNAL CIT Illinois English Bulletin; v62 n1 Entire Issue
October 1974

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.75 HC-\$1.85 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Bibliotherapy; *Composition Skills (Literary);
English Instruction; Fiction; *Individual Reading;
Literary Analysis; Literary Perspective; *Literature;
Literature Appreciation; Reading Habits; Reading
Programs; Secondary Education

ABSTRACT

Three articles are included in this issue of the "Illinois English Bulletin." In "Form Is Not Enough: Thinking the Unthinkable about Teaching Literature," John Milstead recommends a reading program for high school English courses which emphasizes the quantity (rather than quality) of reading material according to individual student interest so that students develop a reading habit. In "Bibliotherapy," Lina M. Brewer examines the use of imaginative literature to stimulate both affective and cognitive growth. "Learn to Read Fiction by Writing," by Charles R. Cooper, includes a discussion of James Moffet's short story rhetoric and several specific writing assignments paired with short stories from the California state-adopted text, "Counterpoint in Literature." (JH)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

OCTOBER 1974

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Teacher
Literature

ED 099874

iate ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH



CS 201 758

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CONTENTS

Form is Not Enough	
John Milstead	1
Bibliotherapy	
Lina Brewer	8
Learn to Read Fiction by Writing	
Charles Cooper	13

Guest Editor, Terry Sherer, Quincy

Illinois Assn. of
Teachers of English

ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

Official Publication of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English

Vol. 62, No. 1

Urbana, Illinois

October 1974

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FORM IS NOT ENOUGH: Thinking the Unthinkable about Teaching Literature

JOHN MILSTEAD
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

Before leaving for her first teaching job, a young lady asked me, "How do I teach English in rural Oklahoma?" I agreed that the thought of teaching a required course in English in Oklahoma or anywhere else was pretty scary. I had heard little praise and much blame from students about their English courses.

"Get them to reading," I replied. "Furthermore," I continued in professional tones, "you will not get them to read by keeping to the textbook or any other academically processed material. The academic mind is far behind adolescent consciousness. You must break loose from your preconceptions about literary analysis and quality in reading. Go for quantity."

I went on to explain that there are several misconceptions about reading visited upon prospective public school teachers by higher education. One is that quality is more important than quantity. College courses in literature promote analysis, not pleasure. The pleasure comes only to those who like analysis, and they enjoy analysis in history or social studies as much as literary analysis. It is the same kind of activity. But literature offers a different *kind* of pleasure from history or social studies. The reason students hate history is that they are required to read textbooks about history. Real historians writing real history are interesting. Textbooks about history are boring. Since teachers confuse textbooks with history, students do the same thing. History is not boring. Young people live history, and whether it is social history or cultural history or urban development or decline of rural America, they find it interesting and engrossing.

Too many English teachers, I went on to observe, treat literature as a subject instead of as an experience. Your students go to a movie as an experience. They don't see a movie about a movie, thus getting it second-hand. They experience it directly. All art must be experienced directly. We have let the academic tradition get between the student and the literature. Hence, when he says he hates English, he really means the courses in English. He obviously cannot hate language. He talks it constantly. He can't hate to read. Whenever he feels the real direct impulse, he doesn't ask whether he likes to or not, he reads. It may be a sign, it may be the credits on the movie screen, it may be the comic strip or the sports page or directions for sewing. But when he is put in contact with printed words that involve him directly, he reads without thinking whether he likes the process or not.

Although the teacher of literature should know something about literary history, perhaps, and needs to understand the elements of literary analysis in order to have a sense of direction, she should recognize that these elements are really part of the academic tradition, right and needful for the teacher, but not right and needful for the individual student. For the student, it is right and needful to make direct contact with literature, as much literature as possible. For him, the intuition of meaning is much more pleasurable and therefore much more important, than the analysis of meaning or structure. Goethe once said that art is the intuition or synthesis of the on-going life process and the recognition of harmonies in this process. Nothing about scholarly traditions. Certainly nothing about writing term papers on literary subjects.

What is the greatest gift that an English teacher could give the typical American adolescent? I suggest that that gift would be to help him feel at ease with print so that he reads with pleasure. Only such motivation will make him turn again to books and magazines once he leaves school. We perform this service by instilling reading *habits*. "Good" reading habits are not nearly so important as reading a lot, at least not at the pre-college level. The colleges can aim for refinement, but if the public schools do not instill the reading habit, there won't be anything for us in college to refine.

In order to instill the reading habit, teachers must remove the main barriers to reading, which are the academic tradition in literature as represented by textbooks on the one hand and the analytical systems devised in college literature courses

on the other. I call these elements barriers because they interpose the academic tradition between the young people and the literature. The system selects material that is considered good, right, and proper. The teacher is the last negative force in the prescriptive sequence. There are the editors, who must please as large a group as possible. Hence nothing idiosyncratic gets in. The publisher has veto power over the editors. The text itself compromises with numerous restrictive forces, not the least of which is economic pressure reflecting the negative views of the broad community where the book is to be sold. Therefore, the editors include such poems, plays, stories, and condensations as they hope will arouse no opposition from the education officials who ultimately decide the book's fate. Thus far, the teacher and the student are only theoretically involved. Under the educational hierarchy, the teacher must represent whatever text is handed to her. She then becomes for the students the representative not of the literary tradition but of complex social, economic, and educational forces that provide the actual content of the book before them. This is an imposing process of negative selectivity, so that by the time the English course gets to the student, it has been drained of most of its life.

So, I said to the young lady, bypass the process as far as possible, and encourage the students to get at the literature itself, raw and unselected, exercising only such restraint as will keep you out of active trouble with the school authorities. Let boys read sport stories if they want to, and girls also. But don't force them to read the same things all the time. I want to say here that I believe it is especially important to give boys a chance. Find what, if anything, they have an interest in, and let them pursue it, always remembering Mrs. Grundy, of course. The prime virtue is reading. Anything else, all niceties, are secondary. It is undemocratic to assume that our young people will or should accept only the content imposed by an academic aristocracy.

At this time *Slaughterhouse Five* is more valuable than *Silas Marner* or *Great Expectations*. It is more valuable (at least for boys) than refusing to read *Jane Eyre* or *The Scarlet Letter* or *The Sun Also Rises* or reading them under duress because reading in our view is more valuable than watching television. The person with the reading habit is non-selective. His taste is omnivorous. The ultimate test for success or failure

in teaching literature is not what goes on *in* the classroom but what reading goes on *outside* the classroom. When the student has a free choice, does he read or watch television or loaf or what? To check on the effectiveness of the academic tradition for encouraging reading, I think that every English teacher should honestly put to himself or herself the question: How many pages (of anything) do I read annually that are not connected with my teaching? I can hear the defensive chorus, "I just don't have the time." I for one believe that we have the time to do what we really *want* to do. Otherwise, we do what we *have* to do. The question then is do we teach our students to associate reading with what they want to do or with what they have to do? The teacher's primary concern, I believe, is to implant the potential for reading in the student.

Here is the heart of a letter that my former student sent me after less than a semester at her first teaching job. She teaches French and Language Arts. Since her French students are a select group, she finds few troubles there. I should add that her undergraduate major was French. Most of her English was at the M.A. level. I think it is significant that her interests are not originally and primarily with English, because any success that she has must overcome a certain resistance on her part. She would rather teach French, and she is faced with many recalcitrant students in her English classes.

My English classes seem somewhat better, though I have so little patience with their silliness and the discipline problems they present (like tripping people when they walk by, passing notes, pulling the long hair on the girl sitting in front, etc. *ad infinitum*!) But I know now that I **WILL** survive, although I had serious doubts about it the first two or three weeks of school. I was just spoiled, coming from freshmen in college to freshmen in high school!

I have *excellent* news for you about our reading program. After eight weeks of class, the program has pretty well stabilized and settled into a pattern, and also the parents were here this week for open house, and I got quite a bit of feedback from them about it.

Allow a small margin for those who were able to put a sneaky one over on me, and here's how the #'s stack up.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FORM IS NOT ENOUGH

5

N=87

100 pages per week = A

80-90 = B

60-79 = C

40-59 = D

0-39 = F

A -- 43

B -- 11

C -- 3

D -- 4

F -- 26

Total 87

To receive an "A" at this point only 800 pages were necessary. However, 19 of the "A's" already have well over 1,000 pages, some even going as high as 2,000 pages. The thing that surprised me most was that the parents of three students who have over 1,000 pages told me Monday night that their child *hated* to read until now and that some miracle seems to have taken place. That is what I wanted to hear the most. As for parents' reaction, I lost count of the number that said, "I'm *glad* you started a reading program." "The reading idea is good." "Keep making them read," etc. That was their main topic of conversation throughout the open house.

See Dr. M.! I think *we done good*. I really am grateful to you for the idea. I don't think I'd have thought of it, simple as it sounds. The kids were kind of skeptical about the reading program at first, but now they are even gung ho! (except for the real duds who never get excited about anything!) Last week, they were out of school on Friday for teacher's meeting, and they were quite indignant about having to miss reading day.....

The free reading program determines only part of the grade, not the whole grade, of course. As I outlined the assessment procedure to her, she could set aside one class period a week for a quick oral assessment. The student would bring the material he or she had read, and the teacher would open the pages at random. It takes only a half minute to find if he knows the content. I advised her to give a second chance if a student failed the first question. If the student knows while reading that he may be tested on *any* part, but that the test will allow him to put the passage in context, he will read carefully but

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

in relative relaxation. When his teacher reads a paragraph or two from the book, he can readily pick up the gist and relate it to the surrounding material. That way there is no real threat, but rather positive, supportive input to pleasurable reading.

I admit that I do not have the answer for the totally unmotivated student, though I suspect that it lies in the realm of peer group interaction.

By asking the simple question, "What are we teaching literature *for*?" we may put our problem in perspective. Are we teaching literature to carry on the graduate school tradition in the United States? Are we teaching literature to acquaint students with the "best" literature of America or England or the world? Are we teaching literature to prepare students for college courses in literature? Are we teaching literature to instill a sense of its beauty?

You will notice that all of these questions and other similar ones support the academic Establishment. Whether the answer involves the "best" or the beautiful or college preparation, the selective process is academic. It may sound foolish to suggest that we introduce non-academic criteria into the classroom. On the other hand, it may not be so foolish. We may need a new selection process because the old one has fallen flat on its face. At the moment, our students seem to have as clear a perception of our times as most academics. To verify my point, all you have to do is to read most books on the current scene written only ten years ago. They tend to be about as wrongheaded as possible, especially about projections as to the future of higher education. They did not predict the sharp drop in the birth rate. Except for a few voices in the wilderness, they were more interested in affluence than ecology, more interested in consuming energy than conserving it. In our English periodicals, the main thrust was toward genre analysis and explication, with the conservative journals still traditionally oriented toward literary history. There was little if any projection of the impact of the space race, computerization, and the electric media on literature. Culture shock and future shock were not yet popular parlance, though the young people were vividly living through culture shock, as the violence of that time attests.

By and large, schools responded to television by bringing it into the classroom, despite overwhelming evidence that it was non-educational at best and intellectually destructive at

worst. Nor was there any serious assessment of the effect on reading habits that introducing television, tapes, and movies into literature classes would have. We teach English or Language Arts or whatever the name is. But movies and television are primarily visual arts, not literary arts. Dealing in pictures is not the same as dealing in words. As Shelley says in *A Defense of Poetry*, words reach in and express man's internal being in a way that motion, color and form do not. Young people especially relate to words better by using them (which includes extensive reading) than by studying them or studying about them. Just as they know their language almost instinctively because they have used it since infancy, they will know their literature if they are allowed to read as freely and extensively as possible. The direction to form, whether grammatical or morphological, cannot and should not come in language until the child can speak, which is to say communicate verbally. Yet we impose pre-formed patterns of literary taste and canons before most of them can read with any ease. They are products of the electric media. For most of our students, reading is no longer a primary activity outside of school. Our job is to get them to realize reading as a primary activity. If we do not succeed in doing this, reading English and American literature will soon become as esoteric as reading Latin and Greek, which we should remember held sway in schools for a much longer period than the modern literatures have.

It is vital to preserve and revivify the literary tradition for two main reasons in a democratic society. One reason is for that exploration of the internal, individual self that makes literature a distinctive art form, as Shelley said. The other reason is the individualizing quality of literature. Watching television or going to a movie or even a play, invites a mass response. I imply nothing against movies, plays or TV in that statement. I enjoy them all. But to sit alone with a book or magazine is an individual experience eliciting an individual response. The others are social responses. Even if you watch a TV program alone, you must share in the mass reaction it is aimed for. You notice I have said nothing about "art." Art is our business, not the students' business. Art is our work. It should not be our students' work. The student should experience that combination of pleasure and knowledge that is realized in the best art.

Our job at the college level would be much easier if we did not have to worry about motivation. We could then attend to the intellectual problems of background and contexts and forms and research techniques. These are academic and specialist matters, not matters for public schools in a democratic society. And that democracy is the issue at bottom. And that is helping the young person to realize his individual potential through literature.

BIBLIOTHERAPY

LINA M. BREWER
RIDGE FARM HIGH SCHOOL

In our rapidly changing, highly technological society many of our young people are more well-informed, socially conscious and humanely oriented than ever before. At the same time, they face more confusion and problems than any generation of young people has ever faced. Young people are angry at the ambiguity and fraudulence they see in the values of adults. The alienation of young people from society and the generation gap is growing wider and deeper. The technological advances which contribute to our convenience and well-being limit emotional response and many educational systems limit individual spontaneity. As technological change roars through our society, values change and responsible young people are searching for a moral philosophy helpful in dealing with a world wading knee deep in peril of ecological extermination and genocide. They are rebelling against the hypocrisy they see in their world and they need to be reassured. They need a feeling of dignity and respect and self-worth. Young people must feel secure in their search for identity in this threatening world. One way teachers can help their students is through the use of imaginative literature. The use of imaginative literature is an especially effective way of stimulating both affective and cognitive growth. This process is called bibliotherapy.

Bibliotherapy is defined by Caroline Shrodes as the "process of dynamic interaction between the personality of the reader and literature as a psychological field which may be utilized

for personality assessment, adjustment and growth."¹ Zaccaria and Moses define bibliotherapy as the "process of using various kinds of reading materials in teaching and/or counselling for the realization of psychological and mental health objective." They further state that books can be used to foster and to promote mental health by serving as media for helping students solve critical problems they encounter at various developmental stages in their lives.² Bibliotherapy is further defined by J. J. Leedy as "the process of assimilating the psychological, sociological, and aesthetic values from books into human character, personality, and behavior."³

The literature regarding this process suggests that there are many results that may be obtained by the skillful use of bibliotherapy. The following list has been compiled from Shrodes, Russell, Zaccaria and Moses.

Bibliotherapy MAY:

1. Help the student understand his own behavior and that of others.
2. Contribute to competence in activities with the accompanying positive effects of such achievement.
3. Give a feeling of belonging to and understanding one's own country.
4. Provide fun and escape.
5. Contribute to ethical values.
6. Provide better understanding of the motives of human conduct in general and their own in particular.
7. Raise awareness of the many-sided influences which play constantly upon them as they adjust to the world they live in.
8. Contribute to their understanding of the widening and deepening problems of life.
9. Provide a substitute for direct experience permitting reader to stand off to one side and observe life.
10. Help reinforce acceptable social and cultural behavior.
11. Offer opportunities for identification.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

10

ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

12. Facilitate insight.
13. Dispell a sense of isolation.
14. Provide reassurance and support.
15. Help in taking stock of personal assets and liabilities.
16. Provide for catharsis of socially disapproved impulses through vicarious experiences.

Psychiatrists and psychologists generally acknowledge that great artist are interpreters of the personality and that they have plumbed the depths of the human psyche and emerged with incisive descriptions of the dynamics of the personality. Freud, on his seventieth birthday, disclaimed credit for the discovery of the unconscious, saying the credit properly belongs to the imaginative artists who know many things between heaven and earth that academic wisdom does not dream of. Freud maintained that there is scarcely a clinical manifestation from the compulsive neurotic to the delusions of the paranoid schizophrenic that has not been both accurately described and dynamically accounted for by the artist centuries before it has been labeled and categorized by the scientist.⁴

Literature can do many things for the individual. It can give rest, yet stimulate passion and vitality. Aristotle's concept of catharsis views the process as a release of emotion which results in a clarifying and purifying of the individual. Aristotle viewed the response to literature as a harmless and pleasant source for the release of feelings which must be inhibited in real life. Gray sums it up nicely when he says:

Most people would agree that full interpretation of what is read goes beyond reacting intellectually and emotionally to what the author says. The ideas that we have evaluated and accepted often add to our knowledge; they frequently give us new insight into ourselves and others. They can provide new interests and change our attitudes. From a good book we can derive comfort, pleasure, inspiration. Whatever we have gained--new wisdom, interests, or appreciations--changes us in some way. In short, much of what we read affects us whether we are aware of it or not; for the vicarious experiences we gain from reading are sometimes more significant than actual experiences. As we

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BIBLIOTHERAPY

11

assimilate the experiences and ideas obtained through reading and integrate them with those we already have, our total experience is broadened. This fusion of new ideas with old is perhaps the most significant component of the total reading act.⁵

Huey maintains that reading is an information processing activity, one in which an arbitrary conventional set of symbols is used to transfer information from one mind to another. He also shows, as do Karlin⁶ and Money⁷, that there is a high correlation between reading disability and school failure and that there is a high correlation between school failure and low self-esteem. Reading, when carried on as the manipulation of abstract meanings for the attainment of the readers' purpose at the level of difficulty the reader is able to be ninety-five percent proficient, becomes excellent practice in the higher processes of thought.

Reading involves perception, apperception and cognition, and cannot be divorced from the desires and feelings of the reader.⁸ It involves both the affective and cognitive domains. Through the affective domain the reader identifies with characters, gains catharsis and insight and is able to become aware of his relationship with others, gain competence in dealing with his emotions, and change the way he feels about himself. The cognitive domain involves skill development which includes problem solving, concept formation, interpretation, generalization, and application. Literature gives a reader direct and concrete representation of experiences, and its implied judgment of these experiences lets the reader inside the experience so he is able to view it freshly, removed from the reality of his life and yet a part of his life. It evokes heightened emotions and gives the reader something to organize, analyze, and interpret, for literature deals with human emotions of love and hate, fear and anger. Its words are used to depict concrete, unique, universal, and individual experience. They create environments where emotions and images are integrated and interacting--a world of experience and feeling. "Reading is as important as food, a cloud, or a star. It is a looking glass, a ladder, a window."⁹ It is an escape and what else on earth

can do so little harm and bring such peace and joy to the escapee?

Some 2500 years ago Aristotle referred to the uncertainty of his own day on the issue of education in words that are startlingly contemporary:

...people do not agree on the subjects which the young should learn, whether they take virtue in the abstract or the best life as the end to be sought, and it is uncertain whether education should be properly directed rather to the cultivation of the intellect or the moral discipline. The question is complicated, too, if we look at the actual education of our own day; nobody knows whether the young should be trained at such studies as are merely useful as a means of livelihood or in such as tend to the promotion of virtue or in the higher studies...¹⁰

The philosophies of education that persist today mirror this uncertainty. We educate for psychological maturity, for moral character development, and for life adjustment.¹¹ The principles of bibliotherapy are related to education for living point of view. As Huey says, "The world's literature is the best mirror of the soul."¹² Reading then, should be directed to feeding the student's soul--to nourishing his imagination, his moral impulses, and his higher aspirations. Bibliotherapy can be an integral part of teaching and guidance. It is not a cureall. It requires both an understanding of the fundamental dynamics of the bibliotherapy principles and process as well as a sensitive and intelligent use of literature.

FOOTNOTES

¹C. Shrodes, "Bibliotherapy: A Theoretical and Clinical Experimental Study," (Berkeley, 1949), p. 32.

²J. S. Zaccaria and H. S. Moses, *Facilitating Human Development Through Reading: The Use of Bibliotherapy in Teaching and Counseling*, (Champaign, 1968), p. iii.

³J. J. Leedy, *Poetry Therapy*, (Philadelphia, 1969), p. 11.

⁴Shrodes, p. 105.

⁵W. S. Gray, *On Their Own in Reading*, (Glenview, 1960), p. 5.

⁶Karlin, Robert, *Teaching Reading in High School*, (New York, 1964).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

LEARN TO READ FICTION BY WRITING

13

- 7Money, John, *The Disabled Reader*. (Baltimore, 1966).
8E. B. Huey, *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, (Cambridge, 1968), p. iii.
9M. Schwebel, *Who Can Be Educated?* (New York, 1968), p. 20.
10Feeney, Georgiana, "The Ecology of the Bookworm," *Claremont Reading Conference Yearbook*, (New York, 1970), p. 107.
11Zaccaria, p. 3.
12Huey, p. 369.

LEARN TO READ FICTION BY WRITING

CHARLES R. COOPER
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BUFFALO

Writing fiction is a way of learning to read fiction. The student gets on the inside and begins to see for himself what it means to tell a story and how the viewpoint of the speaker or narrator determines the language and meaning of the story. We want our students to read fiction more willingly, insightfully, and responsively; but often our teaching strategies are limited to class discussion of a story. Much too often such discussion barely rises above the level of recitations or low-level comprehension quizzes. In such situations there is little of the "teaching to read." Even the most skillful teacher-led discussion techniques - an inductive questioning sequence, for example, on the imagery and tone and the relation of the two in a short lyric poem - need to be supplemented by other teaching strategies.

One of the most important of the newer strategies is sequencing stories by point of view and then asking students to write stories from the points of view of the stories they read. We have James Moffett to thank for specifying the levels for such a sequence. This article presents a full implementation of the teaching implications of Moffett's short story rhetoric, with a number of specific writing assignments paired with short stories from the California state-adopted text *Counterpoint in Literature* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1967).

First of all, an outline of the short story rhetoric, which provides the sequence for reading and writing. Basically, the sequence gradually increases the distance between the speaker and his listener and the speaker and his subject. In *Points of View* (New York: New American Library, 1966), a collection of short stories for advanced high school students and for college students, Moffett describes the sequence in this way: "We have ordered these stories so as to call attention to who the narrator is, when and where he is telling the story, who he is telling it to, what relation to the events he stands in, and what kind of knowledge he claims." These aspects of the way the story gets told - the rhetoric of fiction - are of primary importance. Here is the place to start in analytic discussions, and here is the place to look for a writing sequence which will teach something about how to read fiction. Further support for this emphasis on point of view can be found in Wayne Booth's useful book, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961, also in a Phoenix paperback).

An instructional advantage of approaching literary study in this way is that it requires no pre-teaching. The student must repeatedly experience each point of view in several stories. There is no need to lecture him on the rhetoric of each point of view or even to teach him the name of each. An additional advantage is that the focus remains on what is unique to fiction. Historical, biographical, and thematic concerns remain secondary, and so literary study doesn't become social studies.

An outline of Moffett's sequence, with its eleven different points of view, look like this:

- A. *Intrapersonal*
 - 1. Interior Monologue
- B. *Interpersonal*
 - 2. Dramatic Monologue
 - 3. Letter Narration
 - 4. Diary Narration
- C. *Personal*
 - 5. Subjective Narration
 - 6. Detached Autobiography
 - 7. Observer Narration

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

LEARN TO READ FICTION BY WRITING

15

D. Impersonal

8. Anonymous Narration: Single Character Point of View
9. Anonymous Narration: Dual Character Point of View
10. Anonymous Narration: Multiple Character Point of View
11. Anonymous Narration: No Character Point of View

Levels 1 through 5 feature unreliable or fallible speakers. At these levels the speaker himself is on display. Levels 1 and 2 are discourse going on now. Levels 2 through 7 appear to the reader to be documents written by characters in the story. Levels 8 through 10 appear to the reader to be actual documents describing events that really happened. There is much more to say about the relations among the various levels, but I will limit myself here to discussing Levels 5 and 6 and for the rest refer you to *Points of View* and to Chapter 4 in Moffett's collection of essays, *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968, in paper).

Level 5, Subjective Narration, features a narrator like Holden in *Catcher in the Rye*, who speaks in a very personal, subjective voice. He is the protagonist in his own story. We may or may not believe him or trust him. Consequently, we must pay close attention to what he says and the way he says it, his tone of voice, deciding how far we can trust him. He is like all of us in conversation - even with our closest friends - fallible, inconsistent often, limited perceptually and emotionally. What we do often contradicts what we say. We do not see ourselves as others see us. This is the voice of confession, defiance, or justification. It is interesting to note that *Counterpoint* neglects this voice. It is represented only once in Poe's "The Telltale Heart," and that story is not really an ideal example of this point of view. At any rate, subjective narration is a voice congenial to adolescents. It is very common in modern fiction: *Herzog*, *Portnoy's Complaint*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and adolescent novels like *The Pigman* and *The Outsiders*.

Level 6, Detached Autobiography, is well-represented in *Counterpoint* by four stories. I suspect this voice occurs so often because of our adult inclination to moralize and set the young straight. (Of course, the young need that from us. Now that my children have reached 14, 10, and 6, I realize how much they need it. I hope you hear the justifying voice of the subjective narrator in that. All I know for certain is that the

young get awfully tired of hearing *only* that voice.) We adults who choose fiction for school anthologies should be careful not to exaggerate detached autobiography or to use it to the exclusion of subjective narration. In fiction the speaker who is a detached autobiographer is some distance in time from the events he narrates. The speaker is older and wiser now and has enough emotional distance from the events to present them with more objectivity. These stories are nearly always about growth and self-knowledge. Good examples are *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *A Separate Peace*, and *Great Expectations*.

This brief discussion will serve to introduce you to Moffett's sequence and to suggest its rich implications for instruction and curriculum development. The specific writing assignments below are from every level in the outline, even though Levels 1 and 2 are not represented in *Counterpoint*. The assignments are *text-independent*; they can be used with any sequence of short stories you can put together from available resources. I use *Counterpoint* here merely to illustrate how a conventional, state-minded anthology can be used perfectly well to teach fiction reading and writing in this way.

It is best to have students read and write several stories in each point of view. If you are focusing on detached autobiography, for example, the student should read a story first and then do one of the writing tasks, then read another story and do another writing task, and so on. The student's stories can be quite brief, perhaps only a few sentences from some students. The writing tasks themselves are full and explicit enough to require no pre-teaching of rules or rhetoric. The student will remain immersed in the rhetorical aspects of a particular point of view as he is continually reading and writing in it. We want him to learn how to, not just learn about. Later, after much practice in one point of view, students can induce for themselves most of its rhetorical principles.

One last point: this rhetoric of the short story is quite complex, far more sophisticated than the usual classifications of point of view (like the overly-simple, three-level discussion on pp. 558-560 in *Counterpoint*). *And yet the average seventh grader can do most of the writing tasks below. We could never teach him this rhetoric as a body of new labels and concepts to be learned, in the way he would learn about osmosis or photosynthesis in biology. And yet he can experience the*

rhetoric for himself and develop new insights about the kind of communication device a short story is merely by doing the writing tasks and talking in an informal way with the teacher and with other students about the results. This fact contains profound implications for the entire secondary school English curriculum. I'll leave you to ponder them.

Students in my courses at the University of California at Riverside must take credit for many of the writing tasks below. Some of them were unusually skillful at developing such tasks, and they were all open to new ways of conceiving how we might teach our students to read fiction more insightfully.

**SOME POINT-OF-VIEW WRITING
ASSIGNMENTS FROM *COUNTERPOINT***

1. INTERIOR MONOLOGUE

(not represented in the text)

- a. Pretend you are on your way to your first period class, and you are fifteen minutes late. You have been late several times before, and your teacher has promised to keep you after school (or some other punishment) if you are late again without a very good excuse. As you walk along, start rehearsing what you will say to her when you get to school. Write as though you are talking to yourself.
- b. Pretend you have just stolen a candy bar and put it in your pocket. As you look up, you see that the owner of the store has seen you do it and is walking toward you. Rehearse what you will say to him when he comes up to you.
- c. Pretend you have received two very low grades on your report card (depending on your parents' notion of what a "low" grade is, the grades could be C's or F's). As you walk home (or ride home on the bus) rehearse what you will say to your mother.
- d. Pretend you have just won a two-week trip to France for two people. You can take your best friend along. You know you will see him (or her) in the hall just after this class. Rehearse what you will say to your friend.

2. DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

(not represented in the text)

- a. Pretend you have come home two hours late from a date. Your mother is waiting up for you; and as soon as you come in the door, she says, "Why are you so late? What have you been doing?" Your mother doesn't interrupt while you are talking, but you can indicate that you notice her facial expressions or gestures. Your task is simply to write a non-stop, minute-or-two-long explanation for your lateness.
- b. Pretend the teacher has asked you to explain why the whole class was unkind to the substitute teacher who taught your class the day before. The teacher and the class listen while you try to explain what happened.
- c. Pretend you have the distinction of being the youngest grandchild at the fiftieth wedding anniversary of your grandparents. You have been asked to make a short speech in their honor. Write out what you would say.

An assignment to show students the *relation* of dramatic monologue to interior monologue:

Pretend one of your friends has just bought a ten-speed bike he (or she) has been earning and saving money for for two years. He has brought the bike over for you to see. You can tell right away it is a cheap bike: there is very little light weight aluminum used in the parts; many of the parts, including the fenders, are plastic; the welds are not very skillfully done; and you can see the paint job was sloppy. Your friend, though is very excited and happy about the bike.

Dramatic monologue writing task: Your friend has just pedaled up. He says, "Hey, what do you think of my new bike?" Write out what you would say to him. He listens but does not interrupt while you talk for a minute or so.

LEARN TO READ FICTION BY WRITING

19

Interior monologue writing task: Your friend has just pedaled off. Write out what is going through your mind about what you really think of the bike and how hard it was not to hurt your friend's feelings.

3. LETTER NARRATION

"The Night the Cops Got Me," p. 208.

- a. Pretend you are visiting another planet where life forms are very different from the ones you are familiar with here on earth. Describe your experiences in a letter to a friend back home. Think of a particular friend and write especially for him.
- b. Recall the most exciting thing that ever happened to you, and retell that experience in a letter to a particular friend. If other people were involved and you can remember any of the conversation, include that as well. As your story unfolds, be sure to include statements of your own feelings about the events.
- c. Pretend you and a friend of yours are very angry at each other for a particular reason. Now imagine a series of notes the two of you might write to each as you argue out the problem. Your task is to write out that series of imaginary notes.

4. DIARY NARRATION

"Flowers for Algernon," p. 172.

- a. Imagine you are a patient in a mental institution undergoing shock or drug therapy for a psychosis. Write a series of imaginary diary entries which cover the course of the treatment. When you begin, you are very ill and confused and out of touch with reality. When you are finished, you are cured and sane.
- b. Recall a period in your life when you were growing or changing as a person in a particularly rapid way. Retell the events of that period as a series of daily diary entries. Let the entries reveal how your attitudes and awarenesses were changing.

- c. Begin keeping a diary of your own. After just a few weeks you will enjoy going back to read earlier entries to see how your attitudes and beliefs are changing. You might enjoy recording your dreams in the diary.
- d. Begin keeping a journal (different from a diary, which is very private) of events in your own life which you would be willing to share with friends. Both a journal and a diary can be a source of ideas and incidents for personal writing assignments your English teachers might give.

5. SUBJECTIVE NARRATION

"The Tell-Tale Heart," p. 357.

- a. Recall an emotional, dramatic event in your own life, preferably a very recent one. Retell it in your own voice (using "I"), presenting your own feelings about the event as forcefully as you can, without worrying about being objective, or even completely truthful.
- b. Pretend you hit and killed a dog while you were riding your motorcycle. The dog's owner accuses you of negligence and the editor of the local paper writes an editorial using you as an example of the irresponsible, decadent youth of today. Write him a letter for publication in which you defend yourself and youth generally.

6. DETACHED AUTOBIOGRAPHY

"The Scarlet Letter," p. 80.

- a. Recall a time when you (or you and a friend or two) rebelled against adult authority. Speaking in your own voice (using "I"), retell the event in as much detail as you can remember.
- b. Recall an event in your life in which you were caught doing something wrong but were not punished for it because you convinced your parents (or a teacher or a policeman) that you did not do it. Retell this event, describing what you did wrong, and explaining what you said and did to escape punishment.
- c. Recall any particularly interesting event in your own life and retell it in enough detail for a reader to see what happened to you. If possible choose an event at

least a year old, one you still remember vividly but are now rather detached from emotionally.

- d. Make up your own story about a classroom incident in an elementary school. Pretend you were the main character involved in the incident and are now an adult retelling the story in your own voice (using "I"), in the same way that your parents retell incidents from their own childhoods. Describe the characters in your story so the reader can see them as real people.

Other stories in this same point of view:

"A Christmas Memory," p. 130.

"Children of the Harvest," p. 198.

"Champion Stock," p. 553.

7. MEMOIR OR OBSERVER NARRATION

"Mateo Falcone," p. 224.

- a. Retell an incident from your own life in which you observed something unusual or interesting that happened to someone else. Retell the incident in your own voice (using "I"), but keep the focus on the *other* person.
- b. Speaking in your own voice (using "I"), write about a close friend of yours, explaining your relationship with him, describing what he is like, and telling about special incidents you observed him involved in. Keep yourself in the writing, but keep the main focus on your friend.
- c. It is common for heroes from T.V., the movies, comics, and books to have sidekicks. Robin Hood has Little John, Batman has Robin, Mr. Magoo has his dumb nephew, the Lone Ranger has Tonto, and Don Quixote has Sancho Panzo. Write a story about some heroic fictional character (one you know about or one of your own creation). In the story you play the role of the sidekick who tells the story in his own voice (using "I"). You can have any kind of relationship you choose with the hero: you can like him, admire, hate him, or envy him. Through whatever incidents happen to the two of you, keep the focus on the hero, even though you remain very much involved in the action.

- d. Think of someone famous (living or dead) you always wanted to meet. Imagine being with him during some famous event, speaking in your own voice (using "I"), but keeping the focus on the famous person. For example, you were a messenger for General Grant during the Civil War, the mechanic who tuned Peter Fonda's motorcycle during the filming of "Easy Rider," or an assistant to Martin Luther King, Jr.

Other stories in the same point of view:

"A Man of Peace," p. 4.

"Top Man," p. 40.

"The Great French Duel," p. 386.

8. BIOGRAPHY OR ANONYMOUS NARRATION, Single

Character Point of View

"The Colt," p. 151.

- a. Tell a story about an event in the life of a person, as seen through the eyes of that person. You will be the narrator of the story, referring to the characters as "he" or "she" or by name. You can express the inner thoughts of only one person, the main character. You may only describe the actions or talk of the other characters, but not their inner thoughts.
- b. Think of someone you admire or respect (living or dead). Write a story about an event (real or imaginary) in that person's life, permitting your reader to see both the actions and inner thoughts of the person. Include other characters in the story, but only describe their actions and speech, not their inner thoughts. As you narrate the story refer to all the characters as "he", "she", or by name.
- c. Rewrite Assignment 3b as a story in which the exciting event in your own life is described as though it is happening to another person. You can even let yourself be the other person (refer to yourself as "he," or use your own name), but do not use "I." As narrator you can describe the inner thoughts of this other person, as well as his actions and speech; but you cannot describe the inner thoughts of any of the other characters.

LEARN TO READ FICTION BY WRITING

23

- d. Rewrite Assignment 4a, telling the story as though it is happening to another person you are watching, but not to yourself.
- e. Take one of your journal or diary entries for Assignment 4c or 4d, and rewrite the events recorded there as though they were happening to some other person.

Other stories:

- "The Turtle," p. 60.
- "The Parsley Garden," p. 217.

9. ANONYMOUS NARRATION, Dual Character Point of View
"So Much Unfairness of Things," p. 98.

- a. Write a story in which an Apollo astronaut encounters a moon-man. Record what the two say to each other and how they look and act, but also reveal to us the inner thought of both characters.
- b. Write a short story in which two people with very different points of view come into contact with each other as a result of an incident both react to quite differently. Describe the characters, write dialogue for them; and, in addition, tell us what their thoughts are. Examples: at a bank robbery, a bank robber and a bank clerk; at the counsellor's office, a counsellor and a student in trouble; at a street demonstration, a racist and a Black Nationalist; at a drive-in movie, a shy boy and a shy girl; at home after school on Friday, a mother and daughter arguing over whether the girl should go out with her friends that night or stay home and babysit.
- c. Rewrite Assignment 7c, narrating the story as an outside observer, telling us what is going on in the minds of both the hero and the sidekick.

Another story in the same point of view:

- "To Build a Fire," p. 402.

10. ANONYMOUS NARRATION, Multiple Character Point of View
"The Lady, or the Tiger," p. 394.

There is no example containing both dialogue and de-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

scription in this text. This point of view is probably more appropriate for long fiction, rather than the short story; but if students can handle the additional complexity, take Assignment 9b and add a person or two to make the confrontation a three- or four-way one.

11. ANONYMOUS NARRATION, No Character Point of View "The Flying Machine," p. 166.

- a. Make up a story in which you explain how something came into being. Some examples might be why men have five toes on each foot, why toes are all different lengths, why men have noses, why zebras have stripes, why stars twinkle at night, why popcorn came to be a favorite at movies. Include more than one character in your story. Describe the characters and have them talk to each other, but do not enter the characters minds to reveal their inner thoughts. Stay on the surface, describing only actions and giving dialogue.
- b. Make up a fairy tale or science fiction story about someone who invents something that can be used for good or evil. Include more than one character, telling your reader what the characters are like and letting them speak for themselves, but do not enter their minds to reveal their innermost thoughts. Perhaps the characters could be put in a position of deciding how the invention will be used; they could struggle with the problem of how far-reaching the effects of the invention will be.
- c. Rewrite Assignment 7c-9c, narrating the story as an outside observer, but not entering the minds of either the hero or the sidekick to reveal their inner thoughts. Stay on the surface only, giving your reader just dialogue and description of physical actions.

Other stories in this same point of view:

"Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," p. 362.

"The Labors of Hercules," p. 433.

Reprinted from the *California English Journal*, April 1973.

ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Editor, **Donald Nemanich** University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH OFFICERS

President, Mary Brinkmann	Glenbard West High School, Glen Ellyn
First Vice-President, Glenn Rittmueller	Proviso West High School, Hillside
Second Vice-President, Margaret Crowe	Carbondale High School
Third Vice-President, Norman Stewart	MacArthur High School, Decatur
Secretary, Elizabeth Munson	Guilford High School, Rockford
Treasurer, Dorothy Matthews	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Executive Secretary, Wilmer Lamar	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Published monthly October through May. Subscription price \$5.00 per year; single copies 50 cents. Entered a second-class matter October 29, 1941, at the post office at Urbana, Illinois, under the act of March 3, 1879.

Address business communication to IATE Treasurer, 100 English Building, Urbana, Illinois 61801. Address manuscripts and other editorial communications to Donald Nemanich, Editor, 100 English Building, Urbana, Illinois 61801. Member of NCTE Information Agreement.